

Testimony before the CGA Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing on Proposed FY 23 Adjustments for Higher Ed Agencies
February 22, 2022
Submitted by Trenton Wright

Thank you, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representatives Dathan and Nolan, and members of the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to address you today.

My name is Trenton Wright. I am a resident of Willimantic, CT.

I work at Middlesex Community College as the Coordinator of Institutional Advancement and the Magic Food Bus Coordinator (two student food pantries and a 7,000 square foot Veteran's Memorial Natural Garden). I am writing to express my strong support for ensuring our community college system is sufficiently funded so we can serve our students and communities.

I support the Board of Regents request for additional funding for our community college system. Increased funding is critically necessary to ensure we can provide high-quality services to our students and communities. We have seen our services in our community colleges decline due to understaffing and insufficient resources.

In the recent Board of Regents Finance Meeting, the BOR Finance Committee proposed a 5% tuition increase for students. I disagree with our community college system increasing tuition on our students. I disagree with tuition increases because so many of our students are already struggling to balance their school, work, and family demands. Increasing tuition continues to shift the burden of education to those in our communities with the least resources.

The Board of Regents for Higher Education is currently threatening to layoff student-facing community college employees. This is reprehensible, particularly given the fact that over the past three years the Board of Regents and CSCU managers have hired dozens of managers – Regional Presidents, Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents – costing millions of dollars. These management positions are completely redundant, wasteful, and are siphoning resources away from community college campuses.

Our public higher education system needs more resources so we can fulfill our mission of providing pathways to higher education, gainful employment, and life-changing knowledge and skills to the residents of CT.

Mental health and food insecurity are two critical student issues that deserve adequate funding. I would urge more transparency and legislative oversight to ensure your funding actually gets fairly distributed to address these issues. Please insure accountability by also insisting on reports from the BOR on how your funding is meeting these student needs.